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## FAULKNERIAN SHADOWS: ANTÓNIO LOBO ANTUNES UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

### ABSTRACT

This article seeks to investigate the degree of influence that the works of William Faulkner have exerted over the output of novelist António Lobo Antunes, thus filling a critical gap and at the same time opening up new avenues for literary research in order to better assess the impact and importance of Lobo Antunes for Portuguese (in particular) and world literature (in general). The comparative approach takes into consideration the style and content of both writers and their approximations across some of their works.

KEYWORDS: comparative literature, modernism and late modernism, Portuguese literature

The place in the space of Portuguese contemporary literature of novelist António Lobo Antunes is, by now, unquestionable. The sheer number of published academic and journalistic articles, the countless books on the writer and the fact that his books have been widely translated in several languages attest his importance as one of the major novelists of Portuguese post-modernism.

However, what some readers and non-Portuguese speaking critics might not be aware of are the specific particularities of post-modernism in Portugal, notably the difficulty in signalling the start of this movement in the Portuguese literary circles. This aspect might seemingly not be important to assess the writer's work in terms of its impact on his readership, but it is of crucial relevance if one sets out to try and understand the author in a wider and deeper sense. For this, comparative recourse is essential. By comparing Lobo Antunes with other authors, we can achieve a more complete perspective on what makes this author such a singular one, especially in the context of Portuguese letters. Even though comparisons have been abundant, it is surprising that not many have focused on what seems to be a strikingly crucial influence – William Faulkner.

Thus, it is the aim of this article to engage in an attempt to put both writers (Lobo Antunes and Faulkner) side by side and identify where the shadow of the North American has been considerably fruitful for the Portuguese, both stylistically and in terms of content. In order to do so, we must delve in the origin of Portuguese post-modernism so as to understand how the comparison will bring light to the singular role Lobo Antunes occupies.

In her book, *Post-Modernismo no Romance Português Contemporâneo, Fios de Ariadne, Máscaras de Proteu*, critic Ana Paula Arnaut claims that, in Portugal, the first attempts at a “post-modernist paradigm (...) takes place in the 1960s, after some still timid attempts at change (...). Such changes were translated more in the path of a new existentialist tone or the techniques of the *nouveau roman*” (Arnaut 2002: 69).<sup>1</sup> These were influences coming mainly from France, where both styles had originated from. But, as Arnaut goes on to point out, these works of “existentialist cut or clear (...) influence of the *nouveau roman* did not succeed in establishing a new periodological paradigm, being rather simply ‘styles of the epoch’” (Arnaut 2002: 81). In other words, their impact was not decisive in establishing post-modernism in Portugal, not decisive to a complete break from the long-lasting shadow of Portuguese modernism.

The decisive moment, still according to Arnaut, comes in 1968, with the publication of *O Delfim*, by José Cardoso Pires. The novel, writes Arnaut, is the one that “truly starts new fictional directions, the post-modern Portuguese fiction, guided by the winds that, in north-american lands, had been blowing since the end of World War II” (Arnaut 2002: 82).

This nod towards the influence found on “north-american lands” as a truly innovative path for Portuguese literature is indeed crucial for the work of José Cardoso Pires, who incidentally was one of the major literary influences (and personal friend) of Lobo Antunes.

However, Arnaut’s argument when identifying this influence as the main departure point from modernism towards post-modernism may not be entirely correct. Yes, North-American modernism (especially that of Hemingway) was a major influence for José Cardoso Pires and it indeed opened the door to a new style of writing that was completely original in Portuguese literature (which was naturally more indebted to the French literary world) but that may not have signified the birth of post-modernism in Portugal. In fact, some critics have even raised some doubts about the actual establishing of post-modernism in Portugal, such as João Barrento, who has ironically stated that post-modernism “(...) was never much seen in the delectable [literary] Portuguese woods” (Barrento 1990: 31). Other researchers such as Marcelo G. Oliveira, in his book *Modernismo Tardio, Os Romances de José Cardoso Pires, Fernanda Botelho e Augusto Abelaira*, identifies what is indeed not post-modernism but rather a “late modernism” (“modernismo tardio” in the original Portuguese). He claims that “(...) the concept of late modernism presents the advantage of connecting authors from the second-half of the XXth century with a modernist tradition which was critical of modernity but at the same time quite different from post-modernism” (Oliveira 2012: 65). Among the authors pertaining to this “period”, Marcelo G. Oliveira identifies Vergílio Ferreira, Agustina Bessa-Luís, José Cardoso Pires, Fernanda Botelho, Augusto Abelaira, Almeida Faria and Maria Velho da Costa, among others. Similarly, Ana Paula Arnaut has also articulated Portuguese post-modernism as an heterogenous period, not quite framed and understood as it has been in other literary traditions, especially in the post-modern approach of reassessing history from a more detached and apolitical perspective. She states that, “(...) in what concerns the Portuguese literary scene, we do not think convenient accepting the theories that, in the (re)appraisal of the historical past, post-modernist texts consubstantiate an apolitical

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Portuguese are translated by the author of this article, unless stated otherwise.

and merely aesthetical reduction of History, with the resulting shunning of any form of ideology” (Arnaut 2010: 137). Even though Arnaut presents this more nuanced view of Portuguese post-modernism, she does not seem to question that, at the very least, there was indeed a post-modernist “impulse” in Portuguese literature, spearheaded by Maria Gabriela Llansol and, crucially, by Lobo Antunes. She states that “(...) we admit, in post-modernist aesthetic, the existence of an impulse of a bolder nature – celebratory – in which we include, exemplary, both llansolian and antunian fiction” (Arnaut 2010: 139). Therefore, Arnaut seems to place Lobo Antunes firmly in post-modernism.

It is noteworthy that Lobo Antunes is not one that figures in Oliveira’s enumeration. There are, of course, legitimate reasons why the researcher has decided not to include him, but this article will strive to rectify that and include Lobo Antunes to that “late modernist” tendency and not so firmly in the post-modern camp. The pertinence of such endeavour is to solidify the author’s status as one of the major (and perhaps the last) representative of that style. It does seem important to do so in the wider literary debate surrounding post-modernism in literature for Lobo Antunes work seems to resist some of the main tenets of post-modernism as it is widely understood, namely that non-ideological alignment identified by Lyotard and others, or the constant questioning of grand narratives, which despite being present in the author’s work, it is not a cynical and detached questioning but more a rather humanist engagement based on some universal values. It is this “reluctance” that give Lobo Antunes his singular place in today’s world literature. In order to give credence to the argument of Lobo Antunes as more of a “late modernist” than a post-modernist it is helpful to find common traits between his writing and that of Faulkner, so as to create a kind of informative indebtedness between the earlier and the later modernist. To do so is fundamental to understand the power of Lobo Antunes’ writing and his relevance, but also to fill in a critical (yet crucial) gap in literary criticism, particularly that pertaining to Portuguese literature.

According to Oliveira, “late modernism” spanned from the publication of *Mudança* (1949), by Vergílio Ferreira to *Finisterra* (1978), by Carlos de Oliveira (Oliveira 2012: 85), therefore preceding the publication of Lobo Antunes first novel, which was to happen in 1979. As for its main characteristic, the researcher defines it as a “radical uncertainty, intrinsic to modernism (...), a consequence of a temporal configuration where the eternal reveals itself as an antithetical pole of an uncertain and transitory present where the sense of totality is absent” (Oliveira 2012: 80).

This “radical uncertainty” and this “transitory present where the sense of totality is absent” could indeed be aptly applied to the writings of Lobo Antunes and would not be amiss if used to describe Faulkner’s writing. Curiously, this link has not yet been properly explored by literary critics. In fact, there seems to have been a certain reluctance to accept the influence that some North-American writers have had in the stylistic development of some Portuguese writers, judging by the criticism aimed at Cardoso Pires’ short-stories, which received “a soft reprimand from some critics because the short-stories were too indebted to Hemingway’s prose (or other American authors)” (Sampaio 2012: 248).

It is not surprising to see that Faulkner’s impact on Lobo Antunes writings has been similarly neglected by the critics. In part, this was the author’s own doing given the fact that the clearest early literary reference is not Faulkner, but Louis-Ferdinand Céline. The

influence of the French writer is well documented and the author himself has admitted this, having manifested his admiration for the writer in an interview to the newspaper *Público*, where he confessed that at the young age of 15 he had written a letter to Céline.<sup>2</sup> However, it must not be ignored that Lobo Antunes has written a preface for the Portuguese translation of *The Sound and the Fury*, or rather, *O Som e a Fúria* (Faulkner).

Portuguese literary critics were attentive to this influence, even if evidentially cautious in their appraisals, given the problematics politics of the French writer, as it is visible in a review by Júlio Conrado, on the occasion of a literary prize given to Lobo Antunes' novel: "That A.L.A.'s guardian angel – Céline, the 'obligatory reference' thrown to the wind by small-minded ignorance – it has been known for very little 'literary' predicates – no great harm will come to the world today. After all, (...) António Lobo Antunes only tries to copy his literary truculence (...)" (Conrado 1986 [2011]: 58). The comparison is not unwarranted, for the stylistic approximation between these writers is evident in Lobo Antunes' first novels. The truculence of the narrator (or narrators, it's not entirely clear) of *Memória de Elefante*, *Os Cus de Judas* and *Conhecimento do Inferno*, the fact that they are disillusioned doctors (psychiatrists) and their voices are (like Céline's) sarcastically caustic, make the approximation inevitable.

Nevertheless, another influence seems to lurk in the shadows, not yet showing its head, but definitely there, not entirely visible yet not entirely invisible – William Faulkner. As a matter of fact, as early as 1983, with the publication *Fado Alexandrino* (Lobo Antunes' fifth novel), novelist and literary critic Dinis Machado was the first to (publicly) detect Faulkner's influence: "We can talk about (...) Faulkner, Céline, Dos Passos, Sábato. Amongst others" (Machado 1983 [2011]: 23).

Notably, the first name that Machado mentions is not that of Céline but rather Faulkner, which indicates that perhaps the author's influence is indeed quite visible if one wishes to acknowledge it. Strangely, no one seems to have picked up Dinis Machado's hint and subsequent criticism has focused more (as it was demonstrated here) in Céline's shadow.

But why is this relevant for current Portuguese literary criticism or critical understanding of the work of Lobo Antunes? Is the comparison with Faulkner a simple exercise in aesthetic contrast or there is something more to it? What it is argued in this article is that such endeavour has two purposes; establishing a wider aesthetical relationship between the two authors, which in a way is merely an academic exercise, but also to uncover some thematic harmonies between the two which hopefully could cast some light on Lobo Antunes' most important intents when tackling his particular themes, by importing some of Faulkner's method and preoccupations and applying it to his topical observations on Portuguese contemporary society. As he will hopefully perceive, this is a crucial aspect of Lobo Antunes' writing and one that makes him one of the most important novelists of contemporary Portugal. Moreover, this article will also try to solidify Lobo Antunes' position as a "late modernist" and not as a postmodernist, as he usually is perceived as, which is of crucial importance for the assessment of his work. Even though not fully fleshed out in here, this argument will hopefully find some of its foundation in this article.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://blogues.publico.pt/ciberescritas/2010/03/23/quando-lobo-antunes-escreveu-a-celine/> (accessed: 4.10.2021).

So where do these similarities lie?

The answer is both in style (as it has already been somewhat hinted at) and in content. Thus, a more detailed analysis is needed. For that purpose, and because a comprehensive analysis of the entire body of work of both writers is far beyond what is possible in the scope of this article, the analysis will mainly be focused on two of Lobo Antunes' novels: *Manual dos Inquisidores* (1996) and *O Arquipélago da Insónia* (2008). These particular novels is where, this article argues, Lobo Antunes is most indebted to Faulkner, where this influence is most visible. As for Faulkner, a particular novel has not been selected but references to his works will be made, as needed to analysis.

## STYLE, VISION AND NARRATIVE POETICS

One of the most noticeable areas where Faulkner seems to cast some shadow over Lobo Antunes is that of style. Faulkner's use of the "stream of consciousness" technique is well documented and has been a point of critique that has already been sufficiently explored by several scholars. This technique would have an indelible mark in Lobo Antunes's writing, the author having adopted it and developed it in his works, making it a trademark of his style. In fact, Lobo Antunes's development of the style goes beyond the mere exercise in aesthetical mimetics. This has been noted by critic Marco Bucaioni:

(...) there is abundant evidence of the influence of Faulkner, Joyce and Woolf on such a refined prose technique. ALA, however, goes further, testing and trying until he reaches a strange balance in which his prose can no longer be thought as an experimental one – a mode that is made to demonstrate its own possibility against the tradition – but instead becomes something like a new canonical style for a newly possible literary era (Bucaioni 2019: 482).

There are, of course, differences between Faulkner's and Lobo Antunes' styles, but it is not a stretch to see how the two are comparable. Whereas Faulkner does not exclusively use the interior monologue in his narrative style, Lobo Antunes dispenses with any other voice that is *not* that of the interior monologue. However, it is how that interior monologue is written that we can find a point of comparison. As an example, we could look at Quentin's monologue, in *The Sound and the Fury*:

(...) I'm going to send my sons there give them a better chance than I had wait dont go yet let's discuss this thing a young man gets these ideas and I'm all for them does him good while he's in school forms his character good for tradition the school but when he gets out into the world he'll have to get his the best way he can because he'll find that everybody else is doing the same thing and be damned to here let's shake hands and let bygones by bygones for your mother's sake remember her health come on give me your hand here look at it it's just out of convent look not a blemish not even been creased yet see here

To hell with your money

No no come on I belong to the family now see I know how it is with a young fellow he has lots of private affairs it's always pretty hard to get the old man to stump up for I know haven't I been there and not so long ago either (...) (Faulkner 1929: 57).

This sort of "suspended sentence" introducing a dialogue appears also in Lobo Antunes, moulded to the author's own style:

(...) proviesse directamente da bela moça, que habitava com os pais uma parte do celeiro dividindo as trevas e o milho com as aranhas e as cobras, mais a pagela de São Roque, colada com tiras de adesivo, a presidir aos mosquitos, aos caixotes dos móveis e aos canecos oxidados, o senhor ministro a chupar a cigarrilha sob a grita dos corvos, considerando a ninfa

– Não é má não é má

ele que podia escolher em Lisboa as mulheres que quisesse e no entanto, derivado ao que lhe sucedeu com a esposa, puxava-lhe o pé para o chinelo e contentava-se com ruínas como a mulher do sargento (...) (Lobo Antunes 2005: 158).

This technical similarity has been particularly evident in Lobo Antunes' work since his fifth novel *Fado Alexandrino* (even though it has been present in embryo form in all of the preceding novels), having become the permanent feature of his writing.

Another aspect in which Lobo Antunes seems to have drawn from Faulkner is the shifting in perspective. Like the American writer, Lobo Antunes shifts the narrative points of view in his novels, each chapter or section presenting us with a different (or returning) narrative perspective. This is a technique that has been deftly explored by Faulkner, with particular success in *As I lay dying*, in which each chapter is narrated by a different member of the Bundren family. Similarly, in several of Lobo Antunes' novels we can also find an alternance of perspectives from members of the same family or closely associated with each other.

Edmond L. Volpe, in his book *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner* has reflected on the use of multiple narrators, analysing its effect: "The reader (...) cannot accept any account as authoritative. (...) Because the author does not enter these novels, we, as readers, must join the game of speculation by examining the thoughts of the narrators" (Volpe 1971: 34).

This kind of "collaborative" or "participatory" writing is indeed something that Lobo Antunes has aimed at in his works. In his chronicle *Receita para me lerem (Recipe to read me)* he clarifies on the process his writing: "One has to renounce his or hers own key / that which everyone has to open life, our own and that of others / and use the key that the text has given him or her. (...) I demand that the reader has a voice amongst the voices of the novel" (Lobo Antunes 2007: 113–114).

The demand that the reader is an active participant in the writing is, however, not just a technical flourish but rather something that seems to be at the core of both writers' artistic intention. Edmond L. Volpe points out, apropos Faulkner, that "(...) by involving the reader in this process of philosophical speculation and investigation, Faulkner broadens the meaning of his story. The reader is forced to contribute his own meaning, to join in the search for truth in these epistemological novels" (Volpe 1971: 35). Indeed, the same could be said about Lobo Antunes, in a clear connection between the two writers. Therefore, the influence that Faulkner's writing seems to have on Lobo Antunes far surpasses that of mere textual stylistics. He seems to have adopted this particular narrative style with the same *intention* as Faulkner, that of making the reader an active participating in the search for meaning. Style is, therefore, a question of *vision*. Style serves and adjusts itself to meaning.

The authors' style is also a question of experimentalism, something that is at the very essence of modernism and evident in Faulkner's works but also fundamental for Lobo

Antunes. As Marco Bucaioni as pointed out when reflecting on both authors and when trying to view Lobo Antunes's work as that of a late modernist:

Experimentalism in prose was then not only possible in post-revolutionary Portugal; it somehow became the leading possibility for a prose that was striving to reinvent itself after long years dominated by the neorealist tendency. This occurred at a moment when the nation itself was trying to overcome the Estado Novo years and to reinvent itself as a country in democracy, lacking and therefore seeking a new auto-image after the chaos that followed the Carnation Revolution. What is more striking, however, is that ALA's prose as a 'fruit' of late experimental modernism has survived the era in which it was first formulated. At the same time, this kind of non-traditional, strongly experimental, and indeed ever-increasingly experimental model has become central to the contemporary Portuguese canon more than three decades after the publication of ALA's first novel in 1979 (Bucaioni 2019: 493).

When applied to the work of both writers, the experimentation with style means that both writers do "(...) not rely (...) on any single narrative consciousness, but on the reader's own *constitutive consciousness*, his ability to select what terms he will accept, his means of combining them, and, just as importantly, what he will reject" (Kinney 1978: 9). For Lobo Antunes, the participation of the reader is also an integral part of his narrative poetics and perhaps it is easier to understand why when reminded that his literary career has started in 1979, five years after the fall of the Estado Novo dictatorship which had dogged Portugal for forty-eight years. Just as the country looks for a new identity and asks that its citizens participate in a democratic society, Lobo Antunes' work also seems to be making similar demands from the reader.

## IDENTITY, FAMILY DISAGGREGATION AND OTHER RUINS

Stylistic approximations notwithstanding, it is not only here that the two authors seem to be attuned. As we have seen, Lobo Antunes' work imports from Faulkner that very distortion of a concrete and objective reality, that derision and exaggeration on the traits of characters and that erasure of an authorial singular narrative. Indeed, distortion, derision and erasure (Seixo 2011: 24) are a common feature of Lobo Antunes' narratives and not only in the stylistic dimension. The issue of distortion, for instance, is one of the most fundamental aspects in terms of content for the author. It is applied, for instance, when characters are observing their reality or, even more crucially, considering their own identity. Identity is, in fact, a central theme in both writers.

For Faulkner, the question of identity was linked with the meaning of Southernness in the United States, often with the racial identity (especially in the case of mixed-race) of the characters, but always central to the author's writings. Self-definition was, then, a constant:

Our search for meaning in Faulkner gains considerable support from the characters themselves, who are also frequently engaged in exercises of self-definition. Often they are confused because they cannot connect the larger meanings of history to the pressures of a moment or because past irresolution is reawakened by informing present events (...) (Kinney 1978: 38).

This grasping to make sense of a wider historical context, to renegotiate identity (as problematic as it might be) in a context that is no longer ruled by the precepts (whether political, social or economic) of a collapsed reality is common in both writers and trans- versal to their work. “Yet if the limitless possibility of character is a striking and significant part of the Faulknerian carpet, equally important aspects are Faulkner’s concern with both the personal identity and common humanity of his characters” (Vickery 1965: 307). Despite all their identity confusion and grotesque mental imagery, Faulkner’s characters (and Lobo Antunes’, for that matter) never lose their humanity.

If for Faulkner, his characters’ confused inner worlds “(...) becomes a synecdoche for the loss historically felt by Jefferson and the South” for Lobo Antunes, the fragmented voices he presents in his novels are the result of a post-dictatorial, post-colonial and post-empire Portuguese society. As it has been pointed out by Maria Alzira Seixo, in Lobo Antunes’ writing, the “(...) senses of place and identity are strongly shaken not only by the precariousness of memory (...) but primarily because historical and social circumstances lead the community and the individuals (...) to the existential and epistemological uncertainty of being” (Kinney 1978: 34).

We are therefore presented with both the individual and the collective trying to find its identity, also finding its synecdoche in the various voices brought forward.

Central issue in the work of Lobo Antunes, it appears under the guise of multiple and diverse ways of problematization. (...) The identity demand, which in direct correlation with the concept of alterity – central question for post-colonial studies, which in this author find one of their biggest voices in the Portuguese literary panorama –, is played in yet another level of perception, more pungent e more dramatic, when experienced by the characters as mutation of their own identity (Alzira Seixo 2008: 293).

Turning our attention to the novels themselves, two where the shadow of Faulkner’s influence over Lobo Antunes is particularly crystallised must be singled out: *O Manual dos Inquisidores* (1996) and *O Arquipélago da Insónia* (2008).

It is in the first of these two that Lobo Antunes has approximated his writing the most to that of Faulkner, something that has been largely ignored by Portuguese literary criticism but not by North American critics, as we will see. The novel (“plot”<sup>3</sup> aside), is structurally and thematically reminiscent of Faulkner’s work. In *O Manual dos Inquisidores*:

The alternate movement between a present filled with sorrow, misery and disintegration and a past of opulence and power, highlights how that past was already as wounded by moral misery as the present of material misery, revealing the family history as that of a disjointed group

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<sup>3</sup> The novel is constituted by five different parts, presented as “statements” (in the original Portuguese “relatos”, which is a simple recounting but also a witness statement) and follows the pre and post dictatorship realities of a disaggregating family which had been linked with the regime. The novel intersects past and present, linked by the memories of several people associated with the family or by some of the family members themselves, in particular the son of “Senhor Francisco” (a minister of the regime), who is the background shadow of the novel. The setting for this novel is a farm in interior Portugal, property that belongs to the minister. The farm itself and the large mansion in it are settings that suffer a mutation from splendour to decay. The novel also explores the relations of power between the minister and the regime and between the minister and his “employees” at the farm, relationships that are marred by violence and abuse, thus mimicking the power structures of the regime.

of characters with no ties to unite them, no shared affections, with lives hopelessly doomed to unhappiness, marked by abandonment, rejection, contempt (Alzira Seixo 2008: 128).

It doesn't take much for the reader to see the extent of similarity in regards family disaggregation and decay between this and many of Faulkner's novels (*The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom! Absalom!* etc.). But this is not the extent of it. Critic William Deresiewicz has identified other approximations, namely the dissection of power and its abuses:

As an anatomist of tyranny's intimacies, Antunes recalls (...) William Faulkner. (...) Like Jason Compson and so many other of Faulkner's most memorable figures, the Minister is a figure of arrogance, brutality, and moral squalor, a crude, swaggering patriarch who presides over his estate (...) like a feudal lord. And as so often in Faulkner, tyranny here is above all sexual tyranny, rule by the penis. Senhor Francisco must subjugate everyone to his lust (...) (Deresiewicz 2011: 148–149).

Deresiewicz also singles out the specific atmosphere that can be found on both writers' work, thus highlighting the sense of decay, of the struggle between past and present, evident in the setting of *O Manual dos Inquisidores*:

[W]hat is most Faulknerian about this novel is its atmosphere. With the Minister and Salazar and their regime growing increasingly senescent, we breathe an air rank with illusion, cowardice, futility, and neglect, one in which time and nature take their revenge on those who thought they could possess both. Time now means not tradition, but tradition's underside, decay. (...) Like the fall of the American South, the collapse of the regime comes as only another, but by no means the last, series of capitulations (Deresiewicz 2011: 149).

Thus, despite the relative uninterest (or reluctance) by the Portuguese literary establishment in pairing up the two writers' works, it seems clear that as early (and as importantly, for this is considered the author's masterpiece) as *O Manual dos Inquisidores*, Lobo Antunes has sought in Faulkner an approach, a mode of engagement that could permit him to pursue his literary project in (yet) another dimension, a most crucial one, in fact, as it permitted him to explore in more depth the troubled legacy of the dictatorship in Portuguese society.

However, such approximations were not exhausted in this novel. Even though they appear scattered in all subsequent works (a decent and in-depth analysis of those works is not possible here), it is in the 2008 novel *O Arquipélago da Insónia* that they will reappear most evidently. In the novel, the reader returns to a similar space to that of *O Manual dos Inquisidores*, a decaying house in a farm: "Where do I get the impression that in the house, even though it is the same, almost everything is missing?" (Lobo Antunes 2008: 13). In it, the reader will also find a disaggregating family with an authoritarian father and, the most obviously Faulknerian aspect, an autistic son who is also the opening narrator of the novel. The connections with Faulkner have been aptly identified by Maria Alzira Seixo, who points out that: "This disintegration is partly linked to the authoritarianism of the old man, who does not recognize in his son (...) the ability to succeed him (...)" (Seixo 2008 [2011]: 413). She goes on to identify the work "as a novel in which the author's fictional mode converges in the darkness in the vision of things and the reminiscent obsession, and the usual changes in the temporal order (of Faulknerian

reminiscences, the traces of the autistic reminding us of Benjy, in *The Sound and the Fury*” (Alzira Seixo 2008 [2011]: 417). Therefore, it is possible to see that Faulkner’s influence has been enduring, albeit not taking away the merits of Lobo Antunes’ own work but rather highlighting them. In a way, Lobo Antunes’ work is sometimes a corrective (as in the topic of race, which won’t be addressed here) or an update of Faulkner’s oeuvre, the preoccupations of the former being also the preoccupations of the latter.

As a way of conclusion, it will suffice to say that hopefully this article’s aim of serving as an incipit for a wider comparative study of the two authors has been fulfilled, its importance pinpointed and a gap in literary criticism partially filled. In terms of approximating the two authors, the similarities in both style and themes must be highlighted, even though the treatment of some topics being radically different (i.e. the topic of race). This tentative critical approximation between the two writers aims to widen the perception of Faulkner’s impact in Lobo Antunes writing, not only in its stylistic outlook but much more than that. Faulknerian stylistics are, for Lobo Antunes, a way of going even further into novelistic but also existential exploration. Style *is* operative for Lobo Antunes, inasmuch it was for Faulkner. For both, their peculiar experimental styles of narration were also a form of penetrating deeper into realities of social decay, whether that was the American South or the European South (Portugal), for both were post-imperial and post-colonial realities in the wrong side of history. If Faulkner narrated the decay and the disintegration of the American South, then Lobo Antunes narrated the disintegration of post-imperial Portugal. Therefore, from all literary influences present in Lobo Antunes’ work, it would not be excessive to identify William Faulkner as one which casts a vast shadow over the Portuguese author.

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